

ings from Mr. Storey. Scouts who have learnt the Morse Code have managed to understand parts of Mr. Storey's messages, but have as yet been unsuccessful in writing down the messages correctly.

At the first Drawing-room Evening of the term, the Juniors contributed the whole of the programme, and gave us a delightful selection of pianoforte solos, songs, and recitations. Other Drawing-room Evenings have been "Robert Burns," by Miss Adam; "Alexander Pope," by Miss Britten; "Chinese Characteristics," by Miss Claxton; and a musical evening arranged by Miss Van de Mersch.

The College flower list now numbers 26, and the bird list 29.—Yours sincerely,

THE PRESENT STUDENTS.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

DEAR EDITOR,

Several students have thought that it would be nice to have a kind of "club" room in London, where students could write letters, see the papers, meet their friends, have tea, etc., etc. Miss Faunce and Miss Evans are thinking of moving their school to larger premises, and they would most likely be able to provide such a room; they would, however, naturally like to know whether this proposal would be welcomed and supported by a good number of members. Will those students that feel the suggestion to be a good one, and those that would support such a plan by becoming members for a small yearly subscription, write, *as soon as possible*, to Miss Faunce and Miss Evans at 13, Chilworth Street, Bayswater, W. It seems to me that such a room might be a great convenience to students with resident posts in London, and also to those living further away who might every now and then come up to town for the day. I hope

that *many* students will write and say what they think.—  
Yours sincerely,

W. KITCHING.

Ma'adi,  
Near Cairo,

November 30th, 1913.

DEAR EDITOR,

You asked me to write an article on life in Egypt, but when I read the account of Ceylon in the November PLANT I am almost afraid of repetition. There are, however, many points of difference, of course: to start with, we are not tropical. It is almost impossible to impress that fact upon the tourists, who arrive here in November and December clad in linen suiting and wearing a solar topee, with a great deal of sunproof linen hanging over their necks—while we residents are wearing our thick winter clothes and furs and muffs! There is a great deal of similarity, I think, in all Oriental towns, and though cosmopolitan, Cairo is most decidedly Oriental. I believe I described the bazaars, pyramids, etc., in a previous account, written when I was tourist here last winter; perhaps the home life of the ordinary resident might interest some people.

Of course the servants are Arabs, and as a rule speak no English. This would not be so bad if one could *learn* Arabic as one would French or German, from a book and from grammars—but the unfortunate thing is that the servants cannot speak Arabic either! That is to say, the true Arabic which is written and spoken by the educated Egyptians is a perfectly different language from that spoken by the working classes. You might just as well teach a Frenchman the English of Shakespeare, and then send him off to Skye or the west coast of Ireland, and expect him to understand



them. All this makes it rather difficult for the beginner to do any housekeeping. In most cases the man of the house does all the talking for the first six months or so. I am picking up some kitchen Arabic, and my "conversations" with the cook are a source of great amusement to the hearers. The cooks are fairly good on the whole, and have generally had a good training, but the other servants—Sufraggi—are for the most part untrained when they come to you—at any rate, it is better to train them yourself. They are extremely adaptable and imitative, but it is very difficult for one to realize the fact that they know *none* of the most rudimentary habits of European living. We have had great fun with one of ours—when we are alone we have him only to wait at table, and we teach him and tell him when he's going wrong. The other day we asked for more bread. He went to the sideboard and cut a piece, and taking it in his fingers, looked inquiringly at me. I thought he meant should he take away the outside piece, which was dry, and said I was glad to see he was so intelligent, and nodded approval, whereat he brought the piece of bread round in his fingers and deposited it on my plate! The difficulty is not to laugh on these occasions—but the native very much resents being laughed at. The only thing is to tell them solemnly that it is not done *that* way, and explain, and they very rarely make the same mistake twice. One has to be careful in telling them things, for they obey to the very letter. An amusing story apropos of that was told me the other day by a resident of some years' standing. He was giving a dinner party a short time ago, and he had some very choice old wine, which must not on any account be shaken. He himself put it on to the sideboard early in the day, and said to his sufraggi: "This is very special wine, and must not be moved at all. I myself will hand it round to the guests." During dinner he was seated with his back

to the sideboard, and he noticed his friends looking in that direction, evidently much amused. Turning round he beheld his sufraggi standing *on* the sideboard and drawing the cork. His master had said the bottle must not be moved, but he had not said it must not have the cork drawn, and this appeared to the Arab to be the only way of doing so without moving it.

The native is a very cheery soul, and nothing delights him so much as a joke. It has to be *very* visible and simple, or he doesn't fathom it—but a joke will almost always turn away his wrath. For instance, the other day my husband was conducting some ladies round the more remote parts of the bazaars, and some Arabs began to ask for "Backsheesh" (money), and gradually grew in number, and began to jostle. Knowing that this might become dangerous, and that there would be no one to call on for help, he took off his hat and held it out to the men in the crowd, going round and asking *them* for backsheesh. They were tremendously amused, and all went off laughing at once! This shows how easily they can be managed if one goes about it in the right way. A smile now and then and "Saida" (good morning) to railway officials, cab-drivers, etc., will get more attention than a great deal of tipping.

Our garden is surrounded by a field, and I have been very much amused watching the natives ploughing with a yoke of oxen. Their lines can hardly be called straight, for they have not a great deal of control over the beasts, but the result when the crops come up is very good. The harrow is quite an exciting performance. It is a roughly notched piece of wood, and is not heavy enough to make much impression by itself, as it is dragged over the field, so the native stands on it to make it heavier—or if he is very skillful he squats. But the Arab has very little balancing power, and as the harrow bumps and jumps over the hard soil it is a rare feat



for him to get to the end of the line in safety. This sort of thing is extremely picturesque, but oh! how slow. Fortunately no one is in a hurry in Egypt.

The mode of progression here varies according to your social status. The Arabs of the working classes keep bony little donkeys that seem to have unending strength and endurance. In some cases they are badly treated, but not by any means in all cases. The Arabs ride far back, almost on the donkey's tail, and carry their burdens in front. Sometimes it is a pile of durrha stalks, so big that the man is completely hidden. Sometimes it is a small coffin, balanced crosswise over the man's knees. You may always know the latter by the wailers who go in front. The artisans have large mules or camels, according to their trade; and strings of camels, tied together, are to be met with at any corner of Cairo, and more especially in the surrounding country. The tourist, so long as he is in town, drives in a carriage drawn by a pair of Arab ponies, often very fine beasts.

The Arab women of the poorer classes drive on a conveyance very much resembling a large coster's cart or trolley, drawn by donkeys. Sometimes twelve or thirteen will sit huddled up together, their knees to their chins. This, I believe, is a very cheap ride. There are a good many trams, but so full of Arabs that they are not very pleasant for Europeans to travel in, though the residents often do, in the so-called first class compartment.

A very pretty sight one often meets is an Arab wedding. First comes the band, large or small, according to the prosperity of the bride's father. Then a string of carriages or camels, generally both, and then two camels, one behind the other, and carrying between them a litter, closely veiled, in which sits the poor little bride, who has not yet seen her husband. A wedding celebration usually lasts seven days,

and costs the father of the bride a great deal of money. A Bedouin Arab told me the other day that his daughter was going to be married next year. I asked him how much it would cost him, and he said he expected to spend £300. This included the bride's trousseau and the household furniture, which she provides, and the ceremony itself. It is wonderful how these wandering Bedouins, who live in little villages in the desert, manage to get enough money. Of course, they get some of it back, as the bridegroom pays his future father-in-law, and pays pretty heavily if she be of good family or very beautiful. If, however, she does not come up to his expectations, he divorces her immediately, and from thenceforth she goes back to her father's house, and no man will marry her. I am speaking, of course, of the Arab. The Egyptian, and more especially the educated Egyptian, is more rational, and in most cases sticks to his wife. I was going to say wives, but the harem is going out of fashion, as it is too expensive, as a rule, to keep more than one wife.

I am afraid I have wandered rather far from my point, as I said I was going to speak of the home life of the English residents here, and in any case, I fear I have taken up too much of your space. It is, however, rather a fascinating country, and there are so many lights in which to see it that one is a little apt to wander.—Yours, etc.,

J. BOLLAND.

Government House,  
Ootacamund,  
South India.

DEAR EDITOR,

I begin by taking out a quire of foolscap paper. So much is there, indeed, to write about, that I almost feel as if I



could fill it all, but I shall try to remember that there are limitations to the number of pages in the PLANT, as well as to the interest of its readers.

Ooty—what a place for scenery, what a place for nature study, what a place for walking, what a place for climbing, what a place for riding, what a place for hunting, but—what a place to get at!

We came up about the middle of April, with the whole of Madras, to meet at the top a procession from Secunderabad, and to join with them and a few odd people from the North of India, in all the gaieties of the Ooty season. There are riding and hunting (jackals) for those who have horses, tennis, golf—the finest golf in India, they say—races, shows, garden parties, picnics, expeditions, dinners, dances, these last sometimes interrupted by amateur dramatic performances, or rink carnivals. But all these one can enjoy without experiencing Ooty. They don't come very much into my life either, except the evening part, which centres round Government House, so I shall not dwell on them.

When you have crept up thirty miles or so of zigzag road in a motor, or in an uncomfortable mountain railway train, your delight at getting over the edge of the Nilgiri Plateau is very great, and you turn off the engines and roll gently into Ooty with eager anticipation, if it is for the first time. But how disappointing it is! Is this the Ooty that all the world raves about? It is gloomy, and the houses are a startling terra-cotta colour, like the roads, and like all the patches of bare dry earth, which number not a few. Besides, it is very chilly after the sun-baked plains below, and one feels a little upset by the sudden change of air pressure 8,000 feet up into the sky. However, after a few days you wonder how it was you got such a poor first impression. The tall eucalyptus trees that made the gloom are not everywhere, but chiefly in tidy plantations on the Downs and in the old part of Ooty.

Even they smile, and look only lovely when the bright sun pours down from nearly overhead. Once you have become acclimatized, and able to keep enough breath to help you up a few of the hills—for move you cannot without going up or down hill—your supply of energy seems to be inexhaustible. "Was it really possible that a few weeks ago in the plains I did everything with effort, and always wishing I hadn't to?" you ask yourself, and revel in an atmosphere of exhilaration.

Now the nature note-book can have a new start in life, for flowers don't fade the minute you pick them. Also, they are more moderate in size and colour, and more possible for an aspiring artist of very medium talent. There are all sorts of modest flowers here, that you feel you will love as well as admire when they are familiar. Many take the place of those at home for size and colour, but Dandelions, White Clover, Hop Trefoil, Whin and Broom, really and truly are the same. They stand out like lighthouses in a heavy sea of new names and new orders of unadulterated Latin. Very few of the flowers have English names at all. They are all most intensely interesting, especially those that have a peg of previous knowledge to hang upon. What would one think in England of finding thousands of large, pure Arum Lilies up every stream bed, and Red Hot Pokers in the waste corners; of stinging nettle leaves bigger than the biggest sycamore leaf, and of a milkwort that is a great yellow flower on a tree; of innumerable additions to the pea and daisy families, and of a great, new, but perfectly fascinating population of Balsams? It is all very wonderful. And, has anyone else ever kept a flower list where there has never been a proper Scale How one kept before, and where it may be really valuable in the making of a flora?

I will not try to speak of the birds, for we only know the obvious ones as yet. Here again there are substitutes for



the real thing at home. The Nilgiri Robin has the habits of his cousin, even to the twitching of his tail that Miss Kitching points out, but he is black and white, and a size larger. Minas have all the chattering habits of Starlings, but don't go in flocks. Hawks there are, and a few Swallows, but I have not seen Swifts up here. The dear familiar Grey Wag-tail is very much in evidence just now, but seems to be a solitary representative of its charming connexion. The Bulbul is a really superior bird, well groomed, and with a pleasing warble, not unlike a Blackbird in style. Thrushes and Blackbirds there are, but I have not heard much sound from them.

When my pupils and I go out, we love best of all to have a great "exploring," and it is our great ambition to meet a panther. Tigers and panthers are met by some favoured people. Jackals we see commonly. They are brazen almost to rudeness when the hunting season is over. Black monkeys we have seen twice. We had quite an adventure the first time. A loud, hollow, booming sound made us expect big game at least, but a sudden crash! crash! crash! down to the ground and up again, discovered to us three or four long-armed, hairy monkeys, looking rather menacing, though not really of a large size. We slunk away out of the wood, with vague memories of Mowgli's adventures and of fierce monkey stories, helping to speed our flight; but I believe this black kind is really quite harmless.

There are several quaint native tribes about the Nilgiris. Some we never see, as they live in the Jungle, but the Todas are the lords of the soil, for whom the others work, and to whom they pay tribute in kind. Todas worship buffaloes, and live in huts like turned-up boats with the ends cut off. The only ventilation is a tiny door, just big enough to crawl in by.

I feel almost wicked for touching in such a superficial way

on subjects so vast as Indian natural history, and native tribes, and English life in a hill station. Perhaps, Editor, if matter for the press is scarce one day, you will let me write again, and be a little more conscientious. There are such endless interests for Scale How students in a wonderful place like this, that I only wish a few more of them would come and enjoy it.—Yours very sincerely,

JESSIE A. MELLIS SMITH.

## BOOK LIST.

### MISCELLANEOUS.

*Life and Letters of Jane Austen.* By Austen-Leigh. (Smith, Elder, 10s. 6d.)

*In the Way of the Saints.* By G. Hodgson. (Longmans, 3s.)  
Is an introduction to Mysticism.

*Mysticism.* By Evelyn Underhill. (15s.)

*The Petticoat Commando.* By Johanna Brandt. (Mills and Boon, 6s.)

An account of the Boer Secret Service Committee of women during the Boer war.

*Scott's Last Diary.* (Smith, Elder, 42s.)

*The Life of Florence Nightingale.* (Macmillan, 30s.)

*Cambridge History of English Literature.* Vol. X. *Age of Johnson.* (Cambridge University Press, 9s. net.)

*The Tango, and How to Dance it.* By Crozier. (Melrose, 2s. 6d.)

*Via Veritatis.* (Longmans, 6s. 6d. net.)

Careful notes on passages of the Bible for daily reading throughout the year. Very highly recommended.

*With God in Prayer.* By Bishop Brent. (Sole publishers in England, Hugh Rees, Regent Street, 2s.)

Book for help in devotions. Very highly recommended.